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CURRENT LITERATURE.

BOOK REVIEWS.

An elementary botany.

THE TASK of writing an elementary text-book that shall be satisfactory from the pedagogical as well as the scientific point of view is not an easy one, and the result is at best but a compromise in which the instructional necessities should predominate in the selection of material for presentation.

With these facts at hand it must be acknowledged that it is well-nigh hopeless to attempt to produce a manual which shall meet the conditions existing in any great number of schools. The last few years have seen the appearance of many such books in America, which met with no favor outside of the sphere of the personal influence of the author.

The recent effort by Mr. Groom¹ deserves attention. The book is written for students not furnished with compound microscopes and attendant facilities, which are both needless and harmful to young beginners. The author is examiner in botany to Oxford University, and has presumably selected the material for his book with reference to the requirements of English schools. The contents include general morphology, classification of the angiosperms, and physiology.

About one hundred pages are devoted to the segmentation and development of the root and shoot, together with the mechanism of reproduction. A large proportion of this space is devoted to definitions of morphological areas, in which it is scarcely necessary to say that accuracy and conciseness are well shown. The subjects of pollination, fertilization, and seed dispersal are more sensibly treated here than in any elementary text which has yet appeared. Omission of consideration of lower forms is, of course, to be taken for granted.

Under classification, descriptions of thirty important or common families are given.

The section of forty pages devoted to physiology has been so written that no knowledge of histology is assumed, an innovation which will be much appreciated by instructors, and which might well be taken into account in the preparation of more advanced manuals. The principles of physiology are

¹GROOM, PERCY.—Elements of Botany. 16mo. pp. x + 252. *figs. 250.* London, New York: George Bell & Sons. 1898. 3s. 6d.

treated with a simple directness of statement that is much to be commended. Still further illumination is obtained by the outlines of easy demonstrations and experiments to accompany the context. The illustrations are clear and well selected throughout, and many of the best are original. The book will be found very useful in American as well as in English schools.—D. T. MACDOUGAL.

Cultivated plants of Asia Minor.²

IN A BOOK of 278 pages devoted to the natural resources of Asia Minor, Kannenberg has given something over one hundred pages to the cultivated plants of the region. The account is a contribution to agriculture and current history rather than to botany, but the student of cultivated plants will find it useful nevertheless, since it attempts to make an annotated inventory of all the leading plants cultivated or used for food, used in the industries, for ornament and the like, and also an account of forests and timbers. The botanical names of the various species are not given, and this detracts from the value of the book for specific reference, particularly in such confused groups as the rose and the cucurbits. Very full references are given to the literature of the various entries, and the reader will find much of interest in the discussions of local and geographical names for species and varieties. The book is essentially a compilation, the work of Hehn and others being laid under heavy tribute. There are many striking half tones. The book seems to be a distinctly good contribution to the popular knowledge of the immediately useful natural history of the region.—L. H. BAILEY.

The ferns of the earth.

Dr. H. Christ³ has published a general systematic account of ferns which is intended for popular rather than for technical use. This group has always been an attractive one for general presentation, ever since the *Synopsis Filicum* of Swartz in 1806. The last general presentation was the *Synopsis Filicum* of Hooker and Baker, edition of 1883.

The author restricts himself in various ways, so that the work may not be too bulky, and still may be a good general presentation of ferns. He confines himself to the homosporous Filicinae, with their leptosporangiate and eusporangiate groups. Moreover, he does not include doubtful species, or even doubtful genera, attempting to present only those genera and species which are well established and representative. Of course his work is intended

² KANNENBERG, KARL.—*Kleinasiens Naturschätze, seine wichtigsten tiere, Kulturpflanzen und Mineralschätze.* Berlin: Gebrüder Borntraeger. 1897. *M.* 14.

³ CHRIST, H.—*Die Farnkräuter der Erde.* 8vo. pp. xi + 388. *figs. 292.* Jena: Gustav Fischer. 1897. *M.* 12.